

DE PLANTIS TOXICARIIS E MUNDO  
NOVO TROPICALE COMMENTATIONES VII

SEVERAL ETHNOTOXICOLOGICAL NOTES  
FROM THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON

BY  
RICHARD EVANS SCHULTES

MANY of our ethnotoxicological observations made amongst Indians of the northwest Amazon indicate interesting uses of plants the genera of which have never been chemically investigated. The several species discussed below fall very definitely into this category and would seem to represent areas profitable for phytochemical enquiry.

These notes are a continuation of investigations into poisonous plants of the New World tropics which I have been carrying out since 1941 and which is currently being supported by a grant from the National Institutes of Health (No. LM-GM00071-01).

The voucher specimens cited are preserved in the Gray Herbarium, the Arnold Arboretum and the Economic Herbarium of Oakes Ames of Harvard University or in the Herbario Nacional Colombiano. The illustrations were prepared by Mr. Josua B. Clark and the late Mr. John Stanwell-Fletcher.

ARACEAE

No chemical studies appear to have been carried out on the genus *Urospatha*. The juice from the rhizome of

a Brazilian species—*Urospatha caudata* Schott—is used medicinally in the treatment of skin troubles (Peckholt, T.: Pharm. Rundschau 10 (1892) 279, 11 (1893) 379).

***Urospatha sagittaefolia* Schott** Aroid. (1853) 4.

COLOMBIA: Comisaría del Amazonas, Río Amazonas, Leticia and vicinity. "In swamp. Spathe green externally, white-green within. Stem mottled brown-green. Height 6 feet." August 29–September 12, 1966. *R. E. Schultes, R. F. Raffauf et D. Soejarto 24039.*

A field spot test with modified Dragendorff reagent indicated that *Urospatha sagittaefolia* is alkaloid-positive.

***Urospatha somnolenta* R. E. Schultes** in Bot. Mus. Leafl. Harvard Univ. 18 (1958) 123.

COLOMBIA: Comisaría del Vaupés, Río Kuduyari, Cachivera de Itapinema. August 14, 1960. *R. E. Schultes 22589.*

This is the second collection referable to *Urospatha somnolenta*. Like the plant from the type locality, *Schultes 22589* grew alongside a quartzitic rapids in swampy holes in the rock. The locality of this second collection belongs geologically to the same formation as the type locality.

The Kubeo Indians at Yapobodá consider the root of *Urospatha somnolenta* to be toxic if ingested, yet the ashes of the entire plant are employed medicinally in the form of a poultice on ulcers and infected cuts. The Kubeo name of the plant is *ö-mě'-na*.

MYRSINACEAE

***Conomorpha citrifolia* Mez** in Engler Pflanzenr. 4 Myrsin. (1902) 256.

COLOMBIA: Comisaría del Vaupés, Río Paraparaná, Raudal Na-hoo-gaw-hě. "Flowers whitish yellow. Small tree along bank." September 1952. *R. E. Schultes & I. Cabrera 17593.*

The Puinave Indians, some of whom have migrated into the Apaporis basin, call this treelet *yoom-dá-ka* and rasp the bark into *chicha* to impart to it a rather peppery taste. It is recommended also as a febrifugal tea.

#### APOCYNACEAE

***Ambelania Lopezii* Woodson ex R.E. Schult.** in Bot. Mus. Leaflet Harvard Univ. 15 (1951) 76.

COLOMBIA: Comisaría del Vaupés, Río Guainia, below San Antonio, Caño del Loro. "Molongó. Flowers white, fragrant. Growing at edge of water." June 1948. *R.E. Schultes et F. López 10132*.—Comisaría del Vaupés, Río Kananari, Cachivera Palito. "Bush. Flowers fragrant, white." July 25, 1951. *R.E. Schultes et I. Cabrera 13175*.—Río Apaporis, Raudal Yayacopi (La Playa) and vicinity. "Small tree. Flowers white, very fragrant. Latex white." August 18, 1952. *Schultes et Cabrera 16968*.—Río Piraparaná, middle course. "Four meters tall. Flowers white, fragrant." September 1, 1952. *Schultes et Cabrera 17135*.—Río Piraparaná, Caño Teemeña. "Large bush. Flowers white, fragrant. Latex white." September 6, 1952. *Schultes et Cabrera 17245*.

The Barasana Indians boil the leaves of this bushy treelet with the bark of *Distictella racemosa* and *Martinella obovata* to make one of their arrow poisons.

Amongst the related Makunas of the same area, who know this plant as *ɽy-gax-ñö-mee'-kö*, it is apparently not employed for this purpose but reputedly as a fish poison.

#### BIGNONIACEAE

***Distictella racemosa* (Bur. & K. Schum. ex Mart.) Urban** in Fedde Repert. 14 (1916) 310.

COLOMBIA: Comisaría del Amazonas, Río Apaporis, Soratema (above mouth of Río Kananari) and vicinity. Alt. about 900 feet. "Liana. Flowers cream-white. July 31, 1951. *R. E. Schultes et I. Cabrera 13215*.—Same locality. "Woody vine. Flowers white. Barasana name = *mee-tsee-boo-koo'-na*." January 28, 1952. *R. E. Schultes et I. Cabrera 14990*.

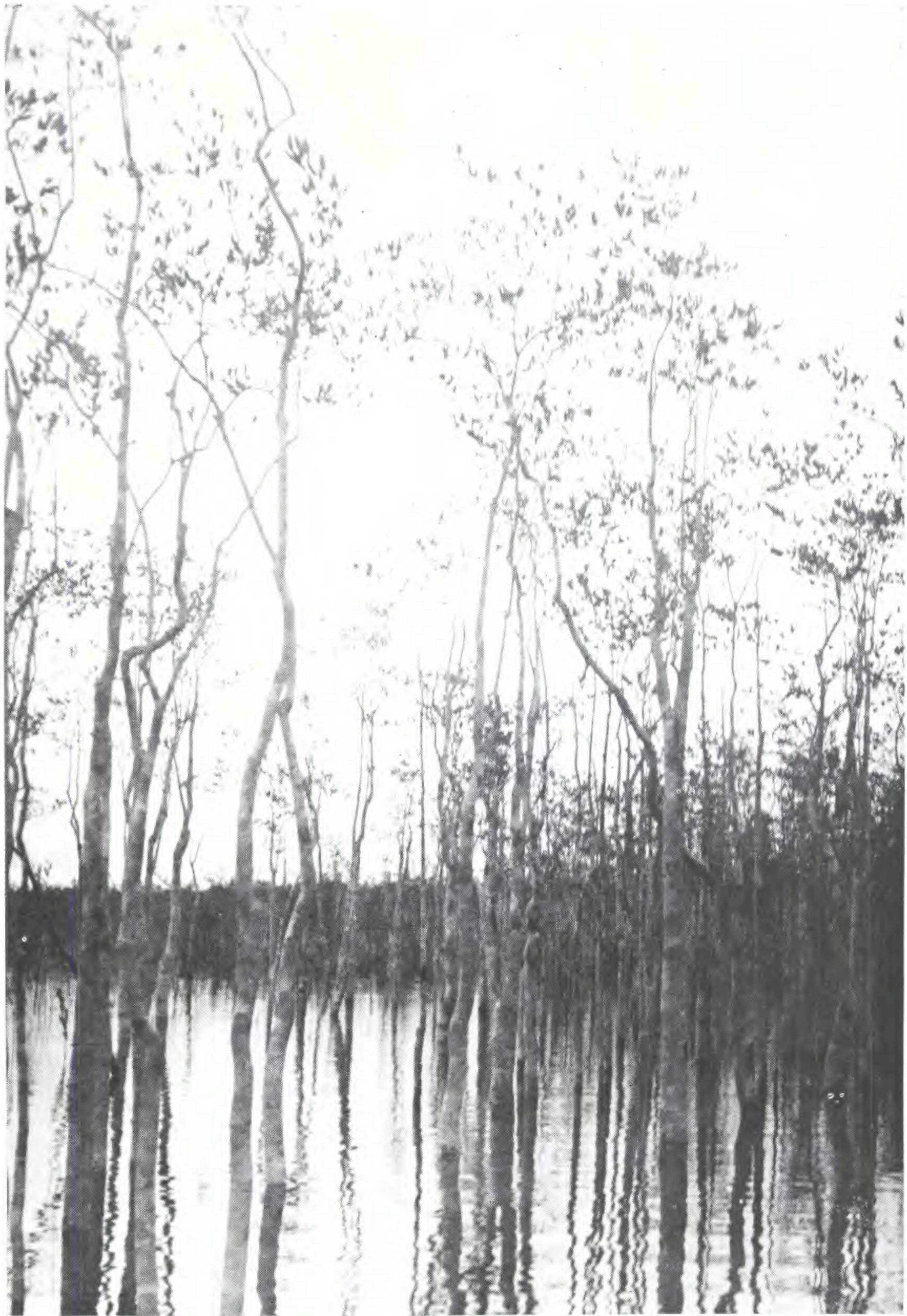
The bark of *Distictella racemosa* is one of the ingredi-

PLATE LXXX



AMBELANIA Lopezii Woods

PLATE LXXXI



*Ambelania Lopezii* Woodson in a flooded caatinga near the confluence of the Ríos Guainía and Negro, Colombia.

Photograph: R. E. SCHULTES



**DISTICTELLA racemosa**  
(Bur. et K. Schum.) Urb.

ents of a type of curare prepared by the Barasana Indians living on the Río Apaporis near the mouth of the Kananarí. The other plants said to be used in this preparation are the leaves of *Ambelania Lopezii* and the bark of *Martinella obovata*. The root of *Distictella racemosa* is reputedly very toxic.

***Martinella obovata* (HBK.) Bureau et K. Schumann ex Martius** Fl. Bras. 8, pt. 2 (1897) 161.

COLOMBIA: Comisaría del Amazonas, Río Apaporis, Soratama (near mouth of Río Kananarí). January 28, 1952. R.E. Schultes et I. Cabrera 14994.

The bark of *Martinella obovata*, together with the leaves of *Ambelania Lopezii* and the bark of *Distictella racemosa*, is utilized by the Barasana Indians in elaborating on arrow poison. An infusion of the bark is said to be a febrifuge but dangerous to use.

